

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T BEIRUT 1301

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: PINS, PFOR, PINT, LE
SUBJECT: GALLAGHER/DYKES

1. I HAD SURETE GENERAL DIRECTOR DAHDAH FOR LUNCH TODAY, AND WE REVIEWED THE CASE IN DETAIL. HE EXPLAINED ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS HE HAS GIVEN IN PAST TO PFLP REPRESENTATIVES WITH WHOM HE HAS BEEN NEGOTIATING WHOM HE NAMED AS ABOU ANWAR AND BASSAM ABU SHARIF. THEY COULD EXCHANGE THE AMERICANS FOR ARMS CONFISCATED BY ARMYYON A SIMPLE TRANSACTION BASIS, OR THEY COULD TAKE CREDIT BY RETURNING AMERICANS NOW AND GETTING DAHDAH'S HELP IN THE FUTURE. PFLP REPRESENTATIVES CHOSE FORMER. UP TO NOW HE COULD NOT SEE HOW TO MANAGE THE TRANSACTION PHYSICALLY. WHEN QUESTIONED, HE FELL BACK ON ARGUMENT THAT IT WAS VERY DIFFICULT FOR THE ARMY TO MAKE DECISION TO GIVE SUCH WEAPONS SINCE ARMY DID NOT WISH EVERY TIME THEY CONFISCATED SUCH WEAPONS TO HAVE AMERICANS OR OTHER KIDNAPPED. I SAID THAT WAS EXACTLY OUR POINT AND REASON FOR OUR OBJECTING TO SYSTEM OF PAYING RANSOM. FACT IS, HOWEVER, THAT THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT IS NOT HELPLESS VIS-A-VIS PFLP IF IT IS INTERESTED ENOUGH IN GETTING THE AMERICANS FREED. DAHDAH READILY ACCEPTED THIS ARGUMENT.

2. I NOTED SOME PFLP PEOPLE HAD BEEN KIDNAPPED PERSONS IN RECENT DAYS. HE SAID HE COULD NOT FOR EXAMPLE PICK UP TWO PFLP PEOPLE FOR FEAR THAT WOULD BECOME A "REVOLUTIONARY CAUSE" THAT IS, GOL KIDNAPPING

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PATRIOTIC PALESTINIANS TO WIN RELEASE OF AMERICANS. I REPLIED

THE IMPORTANT THING WAS NOT THAT THESE MEN ARE AMERICAN BUT THAT THEY ARE DIPLOMATS AND AS SUCH ARE UNDER GOL PROTECTION. WHAT GOL DOES IS FOR ITSELF AND TO FULFILL ITS OWN RESPONSIBILITIES, NOT FOR THE AMERICANS. DAHDAH READILY AGREED TO THIS. I THEN ASKED HIS ASSISTANCE IN GETTING HIGHEST LEVELS OF GOL TO MAKE COMMAND DECISION ON WHAT MEANS GOL WOULD USE TO WIN RELEASE OF AMERICANS. I TOLD HIM WE COULD NOT GET INVOLVED IN THESE PROCESSES. I ASKED HIM TO MAKE OUR CONCERN KNOWN PERSONALLY TO PRES FRANGIE WHOM HE SAID HE WOULD BE SEEING SAME AFTERNOON. HE PROMISED HE WOULD. HE ALSO SAID HE BELIVED PREMIER KARAME WILL NOT BE A PROBLEM. HE WILL GO ALONG WITH ANY DECISION.

3. WHEN CONFRONTED BY ARMA TESTIMONY THAT GENERAL HANNA SA'ID CLAIMED NEVER TO HAVE SEEN THE LIST OF ARMS THAT PFLP WANTS (BASICALLY ABOUT 250 CARBINES, AND SOME FIVE OR SIX MORTARS) DAHDAH PROMISED TO SEE THAT A LIST WAS DELIVERED PERSONALLY TO THE GENERAL TOMORROW. HE SAID IN TWO DAYS HE WOULD TRY TO GET ARMY DECISION ON RELEASE OF THE ARMS. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT HE HIMSELF HAS NO WAY OF KNOWING IF THE MEN ARE ALIVE. WE AGREED THAT ALL WE HAD WERE STATEMENTS BY PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN ASSURED THE MEN WERE ALIVE BUT HAD NEVER SEEN THEM THEMSELVES.

4. IF MEN WERE NOT KILLED A LONG TIME AGO, DAHDAH SAID HE BELIEVED PFLP WOULD HAVE TO RELEASE THEM. DAHDAH SAID HE HAD TALKED WITH THE SYRIANS ON THIS, AND THEY TOO FELT THE MEN WERE AN EMBARRASSMENT TO PFLP AND WOULD HAVE TO BE RELEASED SOONER OR LATER. HE AGREED PRESENT CONDITION OF CEASEFIRE WAS MUCH MORE FAVORABLE TO RELEASE THAN WAR-TIME.

5. INFORMANT B LAST EVENING TOLD US FATAH SUGGESTED IN FORMALLY SOME TIME AGO TO PFLP THAT PFLP TAKE EQUIVALENT ARMS OUT OF PLO ARSENALS AND RETURN THE TWO AMERICANS. HOWEVER, PFLP SAY THEY WANT THE WEAPONS FROM THE LEBANESE, APPARENTLY TO PROVE A POINT. INFORMANT B INTENDED TO BLAME PRES FRANGIE AS STUMBLING BLOCK IN RELEASE OF ARMS TO PFLP.

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6. ACCORDING TO INFORMANT B, CHIEF SYRIAN REPRESENTATIVE ON HIGHER MILITARY COMMITTEE ALI MADANI WILL BRING UP THE MATTER AGAIN THIS EVENING PUTTING PRESSURE ON PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVE FOR RELEASE. THIS IS PRE-ARRANGED BETWEEN SYRIANS AND PLO TO IMPROVE FATAH BARGAINING WITH PFLP. ACCORDING TO INFORMANT B, PFLP ALONG WITH OTHER REJECTIONIST FROM ORGANIZATIONS HAVE BEEN MAKING OVERTURES TO FATAH

FOR "COORDINATION IN THE FACE OF POTENTIAL SYRIAN PRESSURE ON THEM. INFORMANT B BELIEVES THIS IS A KEY POINT IN CURRENT EFFORTS TO GET MEN RELEASED.

7. INFORMANT B AGAIN CAUTIONED AGAINST TOO BLUNT A PRESSURE (IE., WRONG KIND OF PUBLICITY) LEST THIS BE FATAL TO THE MEN. INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, DAHDAH TOLD US HE THOUGHT PUBLICITY WOULD BE HELPFUL AT THIS POINT IN WINNING RELEASE SINCE GOL POLICY MAKERS ARE EMBARRASSED ABOUT THE CASE. WE HAVE BEEN TOYING WITH THE IDEA OF GIVING PUBLICITY TO OUR EFFORTS WIN THEIR RELEASE BUT HAVE NOT YET CONCLUDED TO RECOMMEND THIS STEP TO DEPARTMENT. ONCE TAKEN, STEP IS OF COURSE IRREVOCABLE.

8. MEANWHILE, ECONOMIC/COMMERCIAL COUNSELOR HAS AGAIN SPOKEN TO CENTRAL BANK GOVERNOR ELIAS SARKIS, AND OTHER HIGH GOL OFFICIALS, ON THE CASE. HE NOTED IMPEDIMENT CASE OF TWO MEN PRESENTS TO RESTORATION OF CONFIDENCE IN LEBANON BY FOREIGN BUSINESS CUMMUNITY AND TO RETURN OF DIPLOMATIC STAFFS OF NORMAL SIZE.

9. FRANGIE HAS BEEN VERY BUSY. IT WOULD APPEAR MY APPOINTMENT WITH HIM WILL NOT TAKE PLACE UNTIL NEAR THE END OF THE WEEK. I DO NOT THINK THIS NECESSARILY BAD IN VIEW OF LATEST DEVELOPMENTS.
LAMBRAKIS

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NNN

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